REMARKS

Claims 1-7, 57, and 58 are pending in the present application. In the Office Action dated November 4, 2005, claims 1-7 and 57 were rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 112, first paragraph, as failing to comply with the written description requirement. Claims 1, 2, 4, 5 and 57 were rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 102(e) as being anticipated by U.S. Patent No. 6,863,555 to Ito ("Ito"). Claim 3 was rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 103(a) as being unpatentable over Ito as applied to claim 2 above, and further in view of U.S. Patent No. 6,726,495 to Hirschmann ("Hirschmann"). Claim 6 was rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 103(a) as being unpatentable over Ito as applied to claim 1 above, and further in view of the admitted prior art. Claim 7 was rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 103(a) as being unpatentable over Ito, as applied to claim 1, and further in view of U.S. Patent No. 6,848,938 to Miyamoto ("Miyamoto").

Applicants' Embodiments In Comparison To The Cited References

The embodiments disclosed in the present application will now be discussed in comparison to the cited references. Of course, the discussion of the disclosed embodiments, and the discussion of the differences between the disclosed embodiments and the cited references, does not define the scope or interpretation of any of the claims. Instead, such discussed differences merely help the Examiner appreciate important claim distinctions discussed thereafter.

The present invention is directed to an apparatus and method for coupling electrical devices through utilization of a socket connector to couple electrical plugs to sockets, which may be mounted on a circuit board or, alternatively, on an end of a connecting cable. The socket connector includes a body having an inner surface defining at least one socket with a top and a bottom through which the plug and the silo may be inserted. The socket is configured to receive an electrical plug, a socket silo and a rolling latch on the plug. The inner surface of the socket may also include one or more elongated pawl receiving recesses sized and configured to receive a pawl disposed on the rolling latch on the plug. The elongated pawl recess formed in the inner surface is oriented so that a longitudinal axis thereof extends between the top and bottom of the socket. The position and orientation of the pawl receiving recess provides for a greater amount of engagement area between the pawl of the rolling latch positioned in the socket and the inner surface. This helps prevent the plug from being pulled out of the socket inadvertently.

The Examiner has cited Ito for disclosing a multi-contact connector. Figures 5 and 6 of Ito shows a connector having an outlet case 4 having two hook engaging units 12 formed therein. Each of the hook engaging units 12 are elongated with a longitudinal extent thereof extending transversely to the height of the outlet case 4. As best shown in Figure 6, hooks 11 on a plug P engage the hook engaging units 12 to help hold the plug P in the socket. To the extent that the outlet case 4 has an inner surface that defines a socket, the hook engaging units 12 do not have their longitudinal axis extend between a top of the outlet case 4 to the bottom of the outlet case 4.

Rejection Of The Claims Under 35 U.S.C. §§ 102 and 103

Turning now to the claims, the patentably distinct differences between the cited references and the claim language will be specifically pointed out. Claim 1 recites "[a] multi-contact connector for coupling a plug to a socket silo comprising: a body including an inner surface defining at least one socket having a top and bottom, the at least one socket configured to receive the plug, socket silo and at least one rolling latch on the plug, the interior surface including at least one elongated pawl receiving recess therein accessible through the top and bottom and configured to receive a pawl of the at least one rolling latch, a longitudinal axis of the at least one elongated pawl receiving recess extending between the top and bottom of the at least one socket." Ito and the other cited references do not disclose or fairly suggest a body having an inner surface defining a socket, the inner surface having at least one pawl receiving recess that is oriented with its longitudinal axis extending between a top and bottom of the socket. In particular, the connector of Ito teaches away from claim 1 by positioning the hook engaging units 12 with their respective longitudinal axes extending in a direction that is not between a top and bottom of the outlet case 4.

Claims depending from claim 1 are also allowable due to depending from an allowable base claim and further in view of the additional limitations recited in the dependent claims.

Rejection Of The Claims Under 35 U.S.C. § 112, First Paragraph

Claims 1-7 and 57 were rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 112, first paragraph, as failing to comply with the written description requirement. Specifically, the Examiner alleges that there is no disclosure in Applicants' specification of a socket having a top and bottom, a pawl receiving recess being accessible through the top and bottom, and the pawl receiving recess extending a majority of the length between the top and bottom. To satisfy the written description

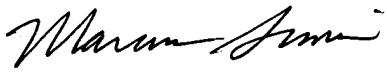
requirement, a patent specification must describe the claimed invention in sufficient detail that one skilled in the art can reasonably conclude that the inventor had possession of the claimed invention. M.P.E.P. § 2163. Additionally, there is no *in haec verba* requirement for the written description. M.P.E.P. § 2163.

Applicants have provided a marked-up copy of Figure 3 from the Applicants' specification that clearly shows support for the disputed claim limitations particularly when viewed in combination with the description of Figure 3 in Applicants' specification. Applicants point out that the embodiment of Figure 3 and its corresponding written description discloses a plurality of sockets formed in a body. The socket has a top and a bottom, and pawl receiving recesses extend between the top and bottom. The pawl receiving recesses are accessible via the top and bottom of the socket. In the embodiment shown in Figure 3, the pawl receiving recesses extend almost the entire distance between the top and bottom of the socket (i.e., at least a majority of the distance between the top and bottom of the socket).

Additionally, the Examiner needs to give consideration and weight to all of the limitations of the claims. The M.P.E.P. is clear that "[w]hen evaluating claims...all limitations of the claims must be considered and given weight, including limitations which do not find support in the specification as originally filed." M.P.E.P. § 2143.03. Thus, even the limitations that the Examiner believes do not have proper written description support need to be considered and given weight when determining whether a reference discloses or fairly suggests all of the limitations of a claim. As discussed above, in the present application, if all of the limitations recited in claim 1 are considered and given weight, Ito clearly does not anticipate or render obvious claim 1.

All of the claims remaining in the application (i.e., claims 1-7, 57, and 58) are now clearly allowable. Favorable consideration and a Notice of Allowance are earnestly solicited.

Respectfully submitted,
DORSEY & WHITNEY LLP



Marcus Simon
Registration No. 50,258
Telephone No. (206) 903-8787

MS:clr

Enclosures:
Postcard
Fee Transmittal Sheet (+ copy)
Marked-up Figure 3

DORSEY & WHITNEY LLP
1420 Fifth Avenue, Suite 3400
Seattle, Washington 98101-4010
(206) 903-8800 (telephone)
(206) 903-8820 (fax)

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